

# Authentic with students, masked with colleagues: conceptualizing teacher workplace authenticity impact model (TWAIM): a qualitative study

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – Workplace authenticity is the degree to which employees feel connected with their true selves in work spheres. This study aims to elucidate the positive outcomes of workplace authenticity among secondary school teachers and its cushioning effect against adverse organizational conditions leading to job dissatisfaction and burnout syndromes. Further, we examine how authentic leadership and organizational politics influence workplace authenticity outcomes.

**Design/methodology/approach** – An open-ended essay questionnaire was used to collect and analyse 30 qualitative data points from a collectivistic country, India. We followed open, axial and selective coding with Gioia methodology for analysis and conceptualized the teacher workplace authenticity impact model (TWAIM).

**Findings** – The study finds that workplace authenticity helps teachers nurture job motivators such as psychological safety, person-organization fit and affect-based trust, and it acts as a buffer against workplace criticism and work strain. Authentic leadership amplifies the positive attributes of workplace authenticity, while organizational politics weakens it. Teachers find themselves more authentic when interacting with students than with colleagues. We also find that junior teachers experience more inauthenticity in the workplace, which enkindles quitting intentions.

**Originality/value** – The TWAIM integrates analytically derived concepts developed through systematic qualitative analysis with the Job Demands-Resources framework to explain how outcomes of workplace authenticity are connected to job satisfaction and burnout syndromes among secondary school teachers. Although the model is qualitative, the transparency in articulating its analytical procedures enables conceptual replicability in similar educational contexts.

**Keywords** Workplace authenticity, Teachers, Authentic leadership, Organizational politics, Teacher workplace authenticity impact model (TWAIM)

**Paper type** Research article

Authenticity, one of the buzzwords in the modern era, is often popularised as the advice to “just be yourself” (Mignault *et al.*, 2023, p. 562). It articulates those unobstructed actions transparently flowing from one’s internal values, beliefs and thought processes (Sedikides and Schlegel, 2024). The larger the degree of such congruence, the greater would be the honesty and sincerity in one’s actions (Maltby *et al.*, 2012). It thus becomes a socially desirable factor for building meaningful and positive interpersonal relationships (Lehman *et al.*, 2018). According to Rogers and Person (1961), only an authentic person can achieve ideal happiness, well-being and psychological health at their optimal level. Due to these benefits, authenticity possesses enormous applications in the domains of personality, counselling, clinical psychology, organizational psychology and management studies (Ariza-Montes *et al.*, 2017; Ibarra, 2015; Kernis and Goldman, 2006; Sutton, 2020). In addition, recent studies have proven the role of authenticity in brain health and neurodegenerative diseases, setting new research milestones (Stürland *et al.*, 2023).

A recent exponential growth in scholarly articles has embraced the benefits of being authentic in the work environment. It has promoted and popularised the term “workplace authenticity” as an organizationally valued and socially rewarded construct, particularly because of its positive implications for attraction, motivation, engagement and well-being (Karelaia *et al.*, 2022; Reis *et al.*, 2017). Workplace authenticity connotes the degree to which



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employees feel connected to their authentic selves in work environments (van den Bosch and Taris, 2014). According to Festinger (1957), holding multiple contradictory beliefs and values results in psychological discomfort. Therefore, acting congruently with one's true beliefs, values and ideas without external influences is crucial for psychological well-being (Rathi and Lee, 2021). This further improves self-efficacy, job involvement, proactive behaviour and performance (Kim, 2023); facilitates intrinsic motivation, well-being, work engagement and job satisfaction (Metin et al., 2016; Sutton, 2020) and helps employees fully identify with their jobs (Van Den Bosch and Taris, 2018). Only authentic interactions help employees in penetrating coworkers' interpersonal boundaries and build a trustworthy relationship (Tang et al., 2023). Furthermore, workplaces that value authenticity elevate organizational attractiveness, enabling organizations to add highly promising newcomers to their talent pools (Baş and Ertan, 2020; Reis et al., 2017).

A large majority of the literature on authenticity is from WEIRD (Western, educated, industrialised, rich and democratic) societies (Henrich et al., 2010). Prior research suggests that authenticity is associated with well-being, including idiosyncratic aspects and the fulfilment of psychological needs in relation to self-esteem, shaped by individual and contextual factors (Ariza-Montes et al., 2017; Heppner et al., 2008; Wood et al., 2008). Some of the researchers are of the viewpoint that the benefits of authenticity are limited only to individualistic cultures (Robinson et al., 2013; Slabu et al., 2014). But recent studies have empirically proven that the benefits of authenticity in collectivistic cultures are as valuable as what it is in individualistic cultures (Rathi and Lee, 2021). As mentioned above, the majority of studies on authenticity are from WEIRD countries; it is necessary to include more contributions from collectivistic cultures, so we are pitching our study in India, which is predominantly collectivistic (Hofstede, 2010).

Prior research has examined the impact of authenticity in the health-care sector (Laschinger et al., 2015; Ockerman et al., 2024; Sharon, 2017), education sector (Splitter, 2009; Villarroel et al., 2024; Han et al., 2021), manufacturing sector (Anastasiadou and Vettese, 2021; Cox et al., 2023; Rahmawati, 2021), hospitality and tourism industry (Atwal and Williams, 2012; Cui and Song, 2024; Yu et al., 2024). While reviewing this, we identified a significant empirical gap in the literature on school teachers' work environment and the impact of authenticity on their work. The study conducted by Ockerman et al. (2024) found that authenticity can reduce stress levels in surgeons. Likewise, no study has yet examined the impact of workplace authenticity among school teachers, especially secondary school teachers. Although previous studies of authenticity have addressed the educational sector, none have addressed this gap. A study on workplace authenticity is highly inevitable and a need of the hour for them, which is evident from the review of García-Carmona et al. (2019). They found that the occupational group with the highest number of sick leaves was secondary school teachers, and the reason was stress in the workplace. We undertake this research to unravel the outcomes of workplace authenticity, with special focus on secondary educational settings, and to examine how such workplaces impact job satisfaction and burnout syndrome among secondary school teachers. Therefore, we address the identified research gaps through the following four major research questions.

- RQ1. What is the impact of workplace authenticity in a secondary school setting?
- RQ2. How does workplace authenticity contribute to job satisfaction and reduced burnout syndrome in secondary school teachers?
- RQ3. How does organizational politics influence the outcomes of workplace authenticity?
- RQ4. How does authentic leadership influence the outcome of workplace authenticity?

To find solutions for these research questions, we undertook a qualitative study to explore the impact of workplace authenticity on job satisfaction and burnout syndrome. Meanwhile, we

try to unravel the influence of authentic leadership and organizational politics on the outcomes of workplace authenticity. The research design we employed is open-ended essays, which are capable of capturing rich qualitative insights and are considered a superior methodology in the domain of organizational behaviour (Issac *et al.*, 2024). We collected responses from 30 secondary school teachers belonging to the Indian sub-continent in the month of May 2025. Pre-designed questions were asked with the respondents related to the outcomes of workplace authenticity and its impact on their job satisfaction and burnout syndrome. Further, we asked questions to examine the influence of authentic leadership and organizational politics on workplace authenticity, based solely on their experience. Our findings revealed the outcomes and barriers to workplace authenticity and their impacts on job satisfaction and burnout syndrome. We used the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model to interpret our findings. Further, we found that teachers' authentic self-expression is higher when they interact with their students rather than with colleagues or academic staff. After data analysis and coding, we conceptualized the teacher workplace authenticity impact model (TWAIM), which elucidates the positive outcomes of workplace authenticity and how workplace authenticity helps in tackling the adverse organizational conditions leading to burnout syndromes and job dissatisfaction in teachers.

We arrange the rest of the study as follows. We first present the theoretical background of authenticity, authentic leadership and organizational politics. Secondly, we outline the methodology adopted for performing the study, followed by data coding, analysis and conceptualization of our model. Third, we present our findings based on the themes generated through quotes and codes. Fourth, we discuss the outcomes of workplace authenticity and its impact on the educational environment. Subsequently, we explain the theoretical and practical implications of our study. Finally, we put forth the limitations and future research directions based on our findings.

## Theoretical background

### *Authenticity*

The concept of authenticity, or being thyself, plays a pivotal role in one's personal and professional spheres (Bayram, 2025). According to Rogers and Person (1961) and Ryan and Deci (1985), an authentic person always acts in line with their internally experienced self and feelings without considering societal expectations. The great influence of philosophical writings shaped modern conceptions of authenticity. Indeed, the concept is indebted to the existentialist and phenomenological writings of Sartre, Heidegger, Rousseau and Kierkegaard (Kernis and Goldman, 2006). However, Trilling's (1972) masterpiece introduced a new intellectual and cultural dimension to the concept of authenticity, grounded in humanitarian and social thought. Gardner *et al.* (2005) became the foundational figure to introduce authenticity as a workplace-specific concept through his study on authentic leadership. Later, the phenomenal contribution of Kernis and Goldman (2006) put forth a multi-conceptualization of authenticity comprising four components: awareness (knowing one's inclinations and character), unbiased processing (information assessment ability about oneself), behaviour (behaving in alignment with one's true self) and relational orientation (honest expressions in one's close relationships). A new horizon of authenticity was unveiled after Wood *et al.* (2008) instigated a tripartite construct to measure authenticity based on the person-centred psychology of Rogers. He proposed authentic living (the degree to which a person is true to themselves), self-alienation (not knowing who one really is) and accepting external influence (acting in ways that meet others' expectations) as the three dimensions of authenticity. Those who possess high authentic living, low self-alienation and low acceptance of external influence can transform their authenticity to an optimum level. Van den Bosch and Taris (2014) adopted these authenticity dimensions into a work-specific measurement, named the Individual Authenticity Measure at Work (IAM Work).

In this research, we deal with the workplace authenticity of teachers. It refers to the extent to which a teacher's feelings, thoughts and values align with their actions at work (Sedikides and

Schlegel, 2024). The level of workplace authenticity increases with such alignments, and persons who lack them are said to be workplace inauthentic (Wilt *et al.*, 2019). Further, the terms authentic workplace and inauthentic workplace are used descriptively, denoting a work environment high or low in workplace authenticity rather than a distinct construct.

We study the outcomes of workplace authenticity and its impact on job satisfaction and burnout syndrome based on Demerouti *et al.*'s. (2001) JD-R model, which has been widely applied in occupational health psychology to explain how job characteristics influence an employee's motivation, well-being and occupational outcomes. The model categorises the job characteristics into job demands and job resources (Bakker *et al.*, 2007). Job demands or stressors explain the physical and psychological costs, like time pressure, excessive workload, which are directly connected with increased burnout and exhaustion (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017). This is particularly relevant for teachers who report poorer mental health than many other professions, as global report claims a high level of occupational stress, exhaustion, anxiety issues and burnout (Agyapong *et al.*, 2022; Segarra *et al.*, 2023; Segarra and Williams, 2025).

Conversely, job resources comprise the physical, social, psychological and organizational aspects that help individuals achieve their goals, stimulate their personal growth and reduce job demands (e.g. autonomy, supervisory support, opportunities for learning and development) (Hu *et al.*, 2011). Within this framework, workplace authenticity acts as a personal and contextual resource that allows teachers to align their self-concept with professional roles, thereby enhancing job satisfaction (Wessel *et al.*, 2020). Job satisfaction is a pleasurable state of positive emotion resulting from one's job experiences (Montuori *et al.*, 2022) and has important implications on motivation levels, productivity, work absenteeism, and job turnover (Lee, 2018). In contrast, constrained authenticity leads to health impairment processes such as stress, emotional exhaustion and burnout syndromes (Kariou *et al.*, 2021). Burnout syndrome is a three-dimensional construct comprising emotional exhaustion, cynicism and reduced professional efficiency (reduced personal accomplishment) that emerges from occupational stress (Bianchi *et al.*, 2015). In sum, the JD-R model provides a theoretically sound explanation of how workplace authenticity connects job characteristics with motivational (job satisfaction) and health impairment (burnout syndromes) outcomes among teachers.

#### *The role of authentic leadership and organizational politics*

Authentic leadership is a concept that emphasises self-awareness, ethical conduct, transparency and alignment of one's actions with one's core values (Zhang *et al.*, 2022). Authentic leaders are individuals who have a deep awareness of their thought processes and behaviour, and others perceive them as persons aware of their own and others' feelings, values and strengths (Avolio *et al.*, 2004). They assure a trustworthy, supportive and healthy work environment by giving priority to the self-expression of followers, promoting transparency in relationships and internalizing their perspectives (Kim *et al.*, 2023; Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008). This, in turn, fosters higher creativity in employees, organizational citizenship behaviours like civic virtues and altruism, eventually leading to enhanced employee performance (McKinnon and Long, 2022; Ribeiro *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, this leadership style is superior to the transformational leadership style in promoting better leader-member relationships, pro-social behaviours, improved employee well-being and organizational performance (Banks *et al.*, 2016; Zhang *et al.*, 2022). Furthermore, an organization promoting authentic leadership styles achieves sustained commitment and nurtures healthier and more engaged workplaces (Peus *et al.*, 2012).

Organizational politics are self-serving actions that influence organizational decision-making (Hochwarter *et al.*, 2020; Mayes and Allen, 1977). Such activities are illegitimate and often detrimental to the organization and its employees (Alvi *et al.*, 2019; Hochwarter *et al.*, 2020). Employees experiencing politics in workplaces feel injustice to their employer, leading

to deviant behaviours and lower performance (Castanheira *et al.*, 2022). Furthermore, it erodes their overall positivity and work enthusiasm (Alamouh *et al.*, 2021). Tang *et al.* (2023) found that workplaces tend to lack authenticity in coworker interactions. Nonetheless, several studies illustrate the positive dimensions of organizational politics and its impact on individuals and organizations (e.g. Drory and Vigoda-Gadot, 2010; Gotsis and Kortezi, 2010; Liu *et al.*, 2010). According to Eldor (2017) and Su and Xie (2023), organizational politics can elevate employee engagement and knowledge sharing and, when managed well, enrich employee involvement and collaboration. However, not every political dynamic is beneficial in all contexts. In this study, organizational politics refers to self-serving behaviour and influence processes within school environments that shape decision-making regarding pay, promotion and access to resources (Castanheira *et al.*, 2022). These political dynamics are considered adverse because prior research has shown that they can undermine affective commitment, organizational citizenship behaviours and job involvement among educators (Atta and Khan, 2016).

## Method

We framed and conducted this study using open-ended essay questionnaires and aimed to track the influence and outcomes of workplace authenticity, including how it contributes to job satisfaction and reduces burnout syndrome in a secondary educational setting. Open-ended essay questions used in the study can bring diversity to the responses; hence, they help generalize results and contribute to the external validity of our findings (Issac *et al.*, 2024). Moreover, it creates an open platform for respondents to express their genuine and honest responses, thus capturing a wide-angle view of the variables under study (Bennion *et al.*, 2020). This methodology provides a raw, fresh understanding of the underlying themes and enables us to conceptualize them into an insightful framework. A socially desirable phenomenon like workplace authenticity can be captured more effectively by this approach.

Thirty secondary school teachers (21 females and 9 males) with a mean age of approximately 36 years and a mean teaching experience of approximately 12 years from both public and private institutions participated in the data collection process (see Table 1 for sample description). The inclusion criteria were secondary school teachers who had graduated with a bachelor's degree in their area of expertise and held a bachelor's degree in education. The study's data were collected during a field visit to secondary schools. In addition, we used Google Forms to fetch data from participants working in different parts of the country. This helped us ensure representation of teachers from different geographical areas across the country.

The participants were given a clear understanding of the concepts of workplace authenticity, authentic leadership, organizational politics, job satisfaction and burnout syndrome. They were asked to furnish detailed answers to the pre-designed questions based on their knowledge and workplace experience. Questions were designed in such a manner to unravel the experience of workplace authenticity and its impact on job satisfaction and burnout syndrome. In addition, separate questions were asked to examine the influence of authentic leadership and organizational politics on workplace authenticity outcomes.

We determined the sample size based on the data saturation principle (Hennink and Kaiser, 2022), where data collection continued until our initial analysis indicated that no new data with meaningful orchestration were obtained. The data can be accessed via Open Science Framework ([https://osf.io/3vugy/?view\\_only=6f0a3b34f78e48289596a2beae1d089a](https://osf.io/3vugy/?view_only=6f0a3b34f78e48289596a2beae1d089a)).

The following questions were designed and asked for open discussion and conceptualization.

- Q1. What does workplace authenticity mean to you in an educational setting? Kindly explain with suitable examples from your experience.

**Table 1.** Sample description

Teacher ID	Age	Gender	Experience	Area of expertise
1	45	F	7 years	All subjects
2	56	M	25 years	Arabic
3	53	F	28 years	Hindi
4	26	F	5 years	Chemistry
5	24	F	3 years	Psychology
6	47	M	12 years	Hindi
7	55	F	26 years	English
8	40	F	13 years	Accountancy
9	41	M	16 Years	IT
10	48	F	21 Years	English
11	52	F	25 Years	English
12	35	M	6 Years	Management
13	38	F	10 Years	Physics
14	37	M	12 Years	Biology
15	39	F	13 Years	Social Science
16	42	F	15 Years	Mathematics
17	50	M	22 Years	Mathematics
18	29	M	2.5 Years	IT
19	45	F	17 Years	Biology
20	43	F	13 Years	Physics
21	40	F	12 Years	Mathematics
22	47	F	18 Years	Science
23	50	M	20 Years	Management
24	34	F	7 Years	Human Resource
25	32	F	4 Years	Geography
26	45	F	20.5 Years	History
27	52	F	26 Years	Hindi
28	31	M	5.5 Years	Tamil
29	37	F	8 Years	Social Science
30	41	F	11 Years	Chemistry

- Q2. According to you, what are the positive outcomes if your institution ensures workplace authenticity? Elaborate with suitable examples.
- Q3. What are the advantages of nurturing workplace authenticity? Does it help in bringing out the full potential of an individual? Justify your answer with examples.
- Q4. When do you feel most authentic, while spending time with your colleagues or with the students? Justify those situations and the possible outcomes.
- Q5. What are the situations in which you feel less authentic with your colleagues and students? Mention it separately, (a) with your colleagues and (b) with your students. Justify your answer with examples.
- Q6. Do you believe workplace authenticity can reduce burnout syndrome in an educational setting? Explain how it works.
- Q7. Do you believe workplace authenticity can mitigate job stressors and guarantee job motivation? Explain how.
- Q8. According to you, what are the obstacles to creating workplace authenticity? Justify it with examples.
- Q9. How do organizational politics influence the outcomes/results of workplace authenticity? Justify with an example.

- Q10. How does a leader's authentic behaviour influence the outcomes/results of workplace authenticity? Justify with an example.
- Q11. Do you think your workplace is authentic enough? Suggest your views to improve it.
- Q12. Are there any other valid topics or issues associated with this survey study (consequences of workplace authenticity) that you would like to share?

### Data coding and analysis

As part of our inductive approach, after data collection, we used the Gioia Methodology (Gioia et al., 2013) to understand and conceptualize the outcomes of workplace authenticity in a secondary educational setting and its influence on job satisfaction and burnout syndrome among teachers. To present and theorize the codes, the study followed Gopaldas (2016) and implemented his suggestions. Additionally, the Gioia methodology rigorously tracked the first-hand responses of secondary school teachers by applying open, axial and selective coding to the raw data (Modgil et al., 2025). The first-order codes, the researcher-generated second-order themes and the aggregate dimensions resulted in a data structure that encapsulated three central themes and seven sub-themes (shown in Appendix) and laid the foundation for TWAIM (see Figures 1 and A1). To ensure the robustness of the study, we underwent a series of discussions with the participants during the coding and conceptualization process, which eliminated discrepancies and resulted in a unanimous understanding.

### Findings

The section highlights three key themes along with key findings.

#### Work-critic environment

Newly framed educational policies emphasize teachers' well-being with a supportive and nurturing environment, but teachers are still experiencing open criticisms in the workplace and

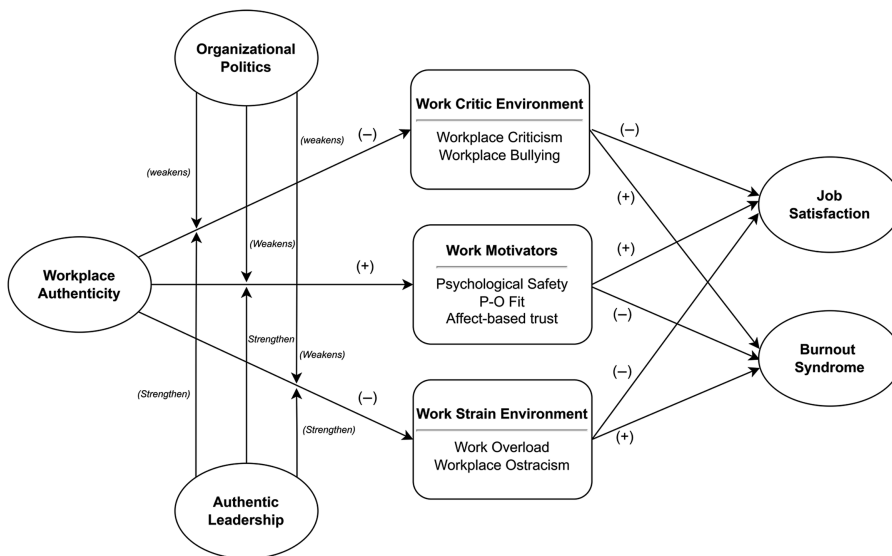


Figure 1. Teacher workplace authenticity impact model (TWAIM)

addressing confrontational interactions. The respondents admit the role of workplace authenticity in softening these toxic work cultures. Conversely, workplace inauthenticity suppresses their true reactions, devoid of trust in colleagues, which enkindles emotional dissonance that leads to burnout syndrome and reduced job satisfaction. Addressing these issues is critical for cultivating creative and productive landscapes. Workplace criticism and workplace bullying were the prominent subthemes identified, out of which destructive feedback, exposing the vulnerabilities in staff meetings and workplaces devaluing constructive criticisms were coined under workplace criticism. Intimidations from senior staff members, especially to junior teachers, frequent confrontations with colleagues, inequality in appraisals and feedback are the instances reported as substantiation of workplace bullying. The generated quotes and codes based on the theme “work-critic environment” are enshrined in [Table 2](#).

*Work motivators*

The subthemes, for instance, psychological safety, person–organization fit (P-O fit), and affect-based trust, selectively coded as work motivators, are the precursors to job satisfaction and a panacea to quieten burnout syndromes. The participants reported that authentic self-expressions in the workplace engender these motivators, and according to [Satuf et al. \(2018\)](#), this could, in turn, have positive health benefits, enhance happiness, well-being and self-esteem. The responses convey that workplace authenticity motivates teachers to freely express their voices without fear of judgement, can openly speak up their viewpoints in staff meetings, implement innovative teaching styles and experiments without pre-judgements from students. Moreover, it brings clarity in ideas, acceptance of mistakes and promotes healthy and open communications, which create psychologically safer environments. The participants reported a strong congruence of their internal values and beliefs with the policies and work culture of schools when they indulge in authentic interactions with colleagues, staff members and students, enabling P-O fit. Those authentic spaces can promote autonomy and demote micromanagement. Affect-based trust is highlighted next. The authentic functioning of teachers with their colleagues and students strengthens emotional attachments and mutual trust in them. [Table 3](#) depicts quotes and codes based on the theme “work motivators.”

*Work-strain environment*

Work strain can bring a physical and mental toll to teachers, which amplifies their chances of burnout and stimulates dissatisfaction with their job. Inauthentic workplaces reported overwhelming administrative tasks, especially for junior teachers, unrealistic expectations

**Table 2.** Identified themes and codes under “work-critic environment”

Selective code	Axial code	Open code	Teacher code
Work-critic environment	Workplace criticism	<p><i>“I experience backbiting, often get negative feedback, and it diminishes my values in front of other colleagues. So, I fear fully expressing myself to others.”</i></p> <p>Open code: Authentic functioning is being obstructed in workplaces that encourage regular criticisms without constructive feedback</p>	T6
	Workplace bullying	<p><i>“In my workplace, authenticity helps me to work without being intimidated, and helps me to work without confrontations with my colleagues.”</i></p> <p>Open code: The bullying tendencies in the workplace have a detrimental impact on authentic self-expression</p>	T5

**Table 3.** Identified themes and codes under “work motivators”

Selective code	Axial code	Open code	Teacher code
Work motivators	Psychological safety	<i>“I found my school as an authentic workplace because it provides psychosocial security and safe spaces to express myself.”</i> Open Code: Authentic work environments foster safety to express one’s opinions without any fear of backlash	T17
	Person-organization fit (P-O Fit)	<i>“Pretending to be someone else is the reason why my values mismatch with my school’s values.”</i> Open code: Authenticity is bolstered when an employee’s values align with the organization’s policies and work culture	T8
	Affect-based trust	<i>“Affect-based trust: My workplace gives me a sense of belongingness, and my colleagues and students respect my feelings and emotions solely because of my genuine interactions.”</i> Open code: Authentic interactions in a workplace promote mutual respect and mutual trust	T30

from the school management, and excessive work hours, resulting in work overload as a major subtheme. According to [Bowling et al. \(2015\)](#) and [Prasad et al. \(2019\)](#), work overload is positively related to turnover intention and absenteeism. The respondents claimed that inauthentic workplaces could create alienation and undermine the sense of belongingness, which stemmed from participants’ experience of exclusion from social gatherings, staff meetings and decision-making discussions. This uplifted the theme of workplace ostracism. The codes and quotes of the “work-strain environment” are elucidated in [Table 4](#).

#### *Impact of authentic leadership*

The study reveals that authentic leadership has a positive impact on the outcomes of workplace authenticity, encouraging teachers’ authentic self-expression in the workplace. As one interviewee highlighted, *“The head of my department is more transparent and open to us, which allows me to express myself without any fear”* [T26] and another mentioned *“My*

**Table 4.** Identified themes and codes under “work-strain environment”

Selective code	Axial code	Open code	Teacher code
Work-strain environment	Work overload	<i>“I was given academic work that was manageable in the beginning, but with time, the workload increased, and I used to feel frustrated and less authentic.”</i> Open code: Increased workload with overtime work hampers one’s work-life balance, which in turn creates stress and a barrier to authentic functioning	T18
	Workplace ostracism	<i>“Sometimes I feel I am excluded from some specific group meetings or from decision-making situations, it blocks my authentic transactions.”</i> Open coding: Intentionally excluding a person from social gatherings and decision-making makes them feel ignored or rejected, causing severe repercussions and building a feeling of inauthenticity	T24

*principal is our role model, his words match with his actions, he cares about us, and we trust him*” [T13]. So, leaders being genuine in the workplace encourage their followers to express their true values and beliefs without any fear, which helps in creating a more psychologically safe and affect-based, trustworthy culture in the workplace. Furthermore, the genuineness of leaders helps employees to match their values with organizational values and working styles. As stated by a respondent, *“The person who leads us is neutral and genuine; those behaviours motivate me to get more aligned with my school’s work culture”* [T19]. An authentic leader can transform the attitude of their disciples, which could help to build their career to the next stage. Especially for a teacher, this helps in building confidence, allowing them to perform innovative classroom interventions and encourage them to work with complete autonomy. As one participant noted, *“I used to experiment with new teaching methods, sometimes my colleagues criticise me for doing this, but my principal’s genuine suggestions and sincere feedback helped me to overcome this”* [T1]. Another pointed out, *“I am unable to teach freely and not enjoying myself fully due to the intimidating attitude of my colleagues; they used to ignore me and give me more paperwork because I was junior to them, but my headmaster’s genuine and real interventions helped me overcome those situations”* [T15]. These are clear instances showing the role of an authentic leader and how it weakens the impact of workplace criticisms, bullying, ostracism and work overload. Down the line, this improves the quality of teaching, thereby improving student performance and giving teachers more satisfaction in their profession.

#### *Impact of organizational politics*

The study found that organizational politics have a negative impact on the outcomes of workplace authenticity, thereby inhibiting teachers’ authentic self-expression. As one respondent stated, *“It is difficult to find out who is aligned to whom; it hinders me in expressing myself to others”* [T21], reflecting a lack of psychological safety in the workplace due to excessive political behaviours weakening the authenticity. Aligning one’s personal values with organizational values and affect-based trust is negatively impacted by organizational politics. For instance, one participant explained, *“Because of groupism, my school culture got diluted, and it is stopping my real values from matching with organizational policies”* [T2]. Another pointed out, *“There is favouritism and bias among staff members, so I can’t trust them and share my feelings”* [T4]. These events cause mental and emotional exhaustion for teachers, undermining the outcomes of workplace authenticity, which in turn affects their performance. The passion towards teaching got undermined due to a highly political mindset among colleagues, resulting in workplace bullying and criticisms. As reflected by one teacher, *“Sometimes, the joy of taking classes and authentic interactions is affected due to mocks and verbal abuses from a group of senior teachers, and they often criticise me for my minor errors”* [T11]. This work climate brings down teachers’ confidence and leads to conflicts and anxiety, which trigger burnout syndromes and job dissatisfaction. The responses from the teachers revealed that authentic behaviours in workplaces can reduce the impact of a work-strain environment, but those relations get worse in the presence of organizational politics. A teacher shared, *“Authentic conversations are lacking in my school’s workplace because of politics; I am a victim and I experience deliberate exclusion from staffroom discussions”* [T25]. Another responded, *“I was feeling blessed to get into a teaching job, and I feel I was authentic that time because there were no politics in my institution in which I joined, but in this institution, I feel political inclinations, and because of that, I was overloaded with extra work”* [T10]. These bureaucratic cultures impede authentic socialization in organizations and escalate work strains, leading to dissatisfaction in professional life and burnout syndromes.

#### **Discussion**

Through this study, we attempt to explore the outcomes of workplace authenticity in a secondary educational setting and how these outcomes contribute to job satisfaction and

burnout syndrome among secondary school teachers in a collectivistic country, especially India, which remains a prominent gap in the literature. In addition, we examined the influence of authentic leadership and organizational politics on the outcomes of workplace authenticity. After data analysis and coding, we conceptualized TWAIM, which elucidates the positive outcomes of workplace authenticity and how it helps tackle the adverse organizational conditions that lead to burnout syndromes and job dissatisfaction in teachers.

Authentic self-expression is essential to teachers' well-being and activates job motivators such as psychological safety, P-O fit and affect-based trust. It stimulates their ability to connect with their colleagues and students, which leads to increased job satisfaction and decreased burnout syndrome (Van Den Bosch and Taris, 2018; Smetackova *et al.*, 2019). Meanwhile, those teachers who hide their true feelings experience more stress in their workplaces, heading towards burnout syndrome (Buric *et al.*, 2021). The outcomes of workplace authenticity have a negative connotation with workplace criticism and bullying in teachers' work-life. In these situations, a teacher feels unappreciated, undervalued and demotivated, which further diminishes their confidence level (Skinner *et al.*, 2021). Further, a teacher's true self gets obstructed when they encounter work overload and workplace ostracism, which can diminish their job engagement and commitment, advancing to stress and burnout syndromes (Hakanen *et al.*, 2006). Furthermore, our findings suggest that authentic leadership strengthens the positive outcomes of workplace authenticity (work motivators), simultaneously buffering the consequences of workplace inauthenticity (work-critic environment and work-strain environment), resulting in attenuating burnout syndromes and aggravating job satisfaction (Jang and Chen, 2022).

Even though previous literature has emphasised the positives of organizational politics (Eldor, 2017; Su and Xie, 2023), our study provides contrasting evidence that organizational politics weaken the positive outcomes of workplace authenticity (work motivators), simultaneously exacerbating the consequences of workplace inauthenticity (work-critic environment and work-strain environment), resulting in amplifying burnout syndromes and job dissatisfaction in teachers. This finding aligns with the work of Tang *et al.* (2023), who claimed organizational politics diminishes authenticity in coworker interactions. Finally, the study revealed that negative workplace scenarios, such as criticism, bullying, work overload and ostracism, are largely experienced by teachers in the early years of their service. It undermines their motivation and passion for the teaching profession, eventually leading to quitting decisions.

### Theoretical implications

The largest contribution of this study is the conceptualization of a new model that connects the outcomes of workplace authenticity to job satisfaction and burnout syndrome among secondary school teachers, which remained a prominent gap in the existing literature. Previous studies have mainly focused on the benefits of workplace authenticity across different organizational settings, but we conceptualize the TWAIM, which clarifies its importance in an educational setting. Our study draws from the JD-R model, which categorises the workplace factors into job demands (stressors) and job resources (supporters). Job demand specifies job-related aspects that require sustained effort, which in turn leads to burnout and exhaustion, whereas job resources include aspects that lead to employee well-being and enhanced performance. We validate this in two ways. First, the factors coded under the work-critic environment and the work-strain environment can be grouped as job demands in an educational setting, and the factors coded under work motivators can be considered job resources. It symbolises that authenticity can act as a buffer against job demands and as a catalyst for enhancing job satisfaction and reducing burnout syndrome. This extends the scope of the JD-R model to the educational sector by integrating workplace authenticity as a key psychological resource. Second, the influence of organizational politics weakens the positive outcomes of workplace authenticity, which can be treated as a major job demand, whereas the

influence of authentic leadership strengthens these outcomes, thereby considering it as a job resource. Further, the degree of authenticity varies across interactional or audience contexts. The study reveals that teachers experience a high degree of authenticity when interacting with students and report a low degree of authenticity in interactions with colleagues.

### **Practical implications**

This study offers several practical implications for teachers handling leadership roles, school management and educational policymakers, to foster and strengthen the benefits of workplace authenticity and its impact on burnout syndrome and job satisfaction. The school management should organize effective induction training and professional development programs, emphasizing value alignment and psychological safety. This encourages open communication, participative decision-making and nurtures trust in colleague interactions, which strengthens the authentic self-expression among the teachers. The need for a stress reduction intervention program is critical to managing the workload among teachers, regulating their emotions and improving their subjective well-being. Further, schools must establish policies such as anti-bullying and anti-criticism as informal mechanisms at least in staffrooms. This helps junior teachers to open themselves up to their colleagues without any hesitation and build a strong rapport, which positively contributes to their job performance and workplace socialization. Furthermore, training and development programs should be conducted for those teachers handling leadership roles with special care to inculcate authentic leadership behaviours. This can address unbiased processing and promote transparency and relational openness in an educational setting. Lastly, the management should be cautious in allocating work equally among teachers to avoid work overload. Further, they can adopt strategies like peer mentoring, collaborative planning and structured team support to counter the adversities of overloading and ostracism. Since teachers feel more authentic with students, initiatives like teacher–student mentorship, feedback loops and student-led learning enhance student outputs; meanwhile, it cultivates open communication among teachers and develops an authentic bond among them.

### **Limitations and future research directions**

This study offers several valuable insights to the authenticity literature and yet warrants several limitations to be addressed. We used open-ended essay questions to draw data, and based on that, we conceptualized our model (TWAIM), but it lacks empirical testing. This model would be helpful for future researchers to perform empirical tests and establish model fits. Further, we conducted our study in an educational setting, focussing on secondary school teachers. Future studies are expected to be organized in primary school settings and in higher educational workplaces. Furthermore, a comparative study can provide a clearer picture of the impact of workplace authenticity across all educational formats.

In this study, we dissected the influence of authentic leadership and organizational politics on the outcome of workplace authenticity. Likewise, future studies can focus on other variables, for instance, organizational culture, job autonomy and other workplace dynamics, to examine their influence on the outcomes of workplace authenticity. Finally, the interviewees reported a high authenticity while interacting with students rather than their colleagues and academic staff. This needs further in-depth investigation.

### **Ethical statement**

This study involved voluntary participation from teachers and did not collect any sensitive or personally identifiable information. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Full anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the research process, and all data were analysed in a de-identified and aggregated form. As the study was non-invasive and did not involve

sensitive human subject data, formal ethics review board approval was not required in accordance with the applicable institutional guidelines.

Appendix

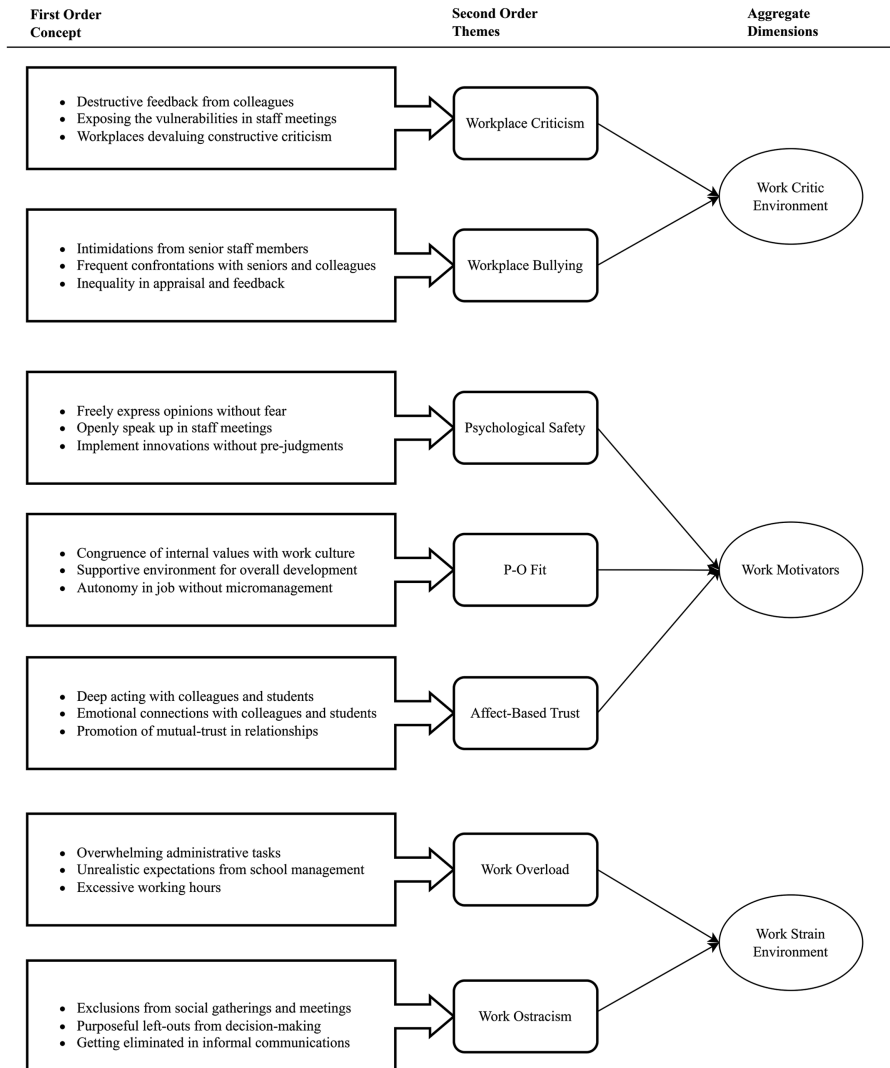


Figure A1. Gioia methodology (data structure)

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